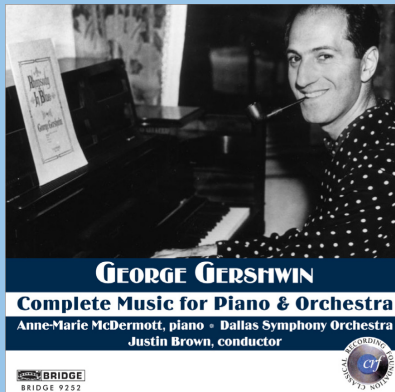


Anne-Marie McDermott

Rave reviews for her latest CD:
GEORGE GERSHWIN
COMPLETE MUSIC FOR PIANO AND ORCHESTRA
Bridge Records



Uncle Dave Lewis, AllMusic.com, July 2008



There are countless recordings available of Gershwin's piano and orchestral music, particularly of *Rhapsody in Blue*; so for something to stand out it has to be really, very good. Bridge's *George Gershwin: Complete Music for Piano and Orchestra*, featuring pianist Anne-Marie McDermott with the Dallas Symphony under Justin Brown, is exactly that - one would hazard to say that is

the best digital recording yet made of this repertoire. The all too familiar *Rhapsody* gets off to a carefully managed start, but once the jazz section is underway, the performance kicks in and packs a wallop. McDermott's piano is recorded in a very agreeable relation to the orchestral complement and is a little louder than usual - and that's a plus. *Second Rhapsody* likewise packs a punch, and - for once - it is not treated as a second-string item to its more famous sister. The Dallas Symphony is crisp, bright and on its toes through the whole recording, and tempi is a tad faster than is usual, in keeping with the sonically ancient but revelatory recordings Gershwin himself made of these works.

The Variations on *I Got Rhythm* heard here is probably the best version made of this overlooked gem since David Parkhouse recorded it with Bernard Hermann back in 1975. Although it's a touch faster than that version, at least it doesn't drag, always a bad thing for Gershwin and far too common in "classical" recordings of his music. The piano sounds great, and McDermott is simply awesome - there are all kinds of small details, both in the piano part and the orchestra - that come through in these pieces that you'll swear you've never heard before. That's not because some variant text is in use, although it appears that McDermott and Brown have reviewed all of the textual options before proceeding, rather than relying on the outdated, heavily edited versions of these scores published in the 1950s. Even if one has achieved a cherished recording of any of these pieces, this Bridge disc must be tried; if it doesn't turn up on classical top ten lists by the end of 2008, then the critics are simply not paying attention. Bridge's *George Gershwin: Complete Music for Piano and Orchestra* is outstanding in every respect.

Dr. Phil Muse, Atlanta Audio Society, July 2008

If I had to opt (heaven forbid) for just one Gershwin recording to take to that proverbial desert isle, this new Bridge offering might just be the one. Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra under Justin Brown give really scintillating accounts of George Gershwin's complete music for piano and orchestra, including *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Second Rhapsody*, *I Got Rhythm Variations*, and the *Piano Concerto in F*. With the exception of the *Second Rhapsody*, none of these works has been exactly underexposed to the public, but we hear them now with all the excitement as if we were first-time listeners. Gershwin brought together "hot" jazz, rhythm and blues, the music of Broadway and Tin Pan Alley and the Harlem jazz clubs, and gave it a high tone finish that the world has been swooning and toe-tapping to ever since. Some writers have described him as a rather naïve symphonist. As people would have said in Gershwin's day, "Malarkey!" He knew the rules so thoroughly he knew when, where, and why to break them.

McDermott's playing in these pieces is fresh and saucy in the up-tempo moments, introspective (in a way that doesn't lose any of the intensity) in the quiet, sad, blues-inflected ones (as a friend of mine once observed, "It's amazing how good you can feel listening to something called the "blues.") Brown and the Dallas SO are equal partners in these endeavors, performing with verve in those smashing, riveting passages in the *Second Rhapsody* and the opening movement of the Concerto that set the pulse-quickening tone for these works. Once that mood is set, you can do a lot of interesting things by way of variety, such as the refreshing Latin rhythms that perk up unexpectedly in the former and the dreamy passage for clarinet that helps provide a moment of repose in the slow movement of the latter.

For choice moments, listen to the soulful wail of the clarinet glissando that opens *Rhapsody in Blue*, the lush sound of the strings when the principal melody is reintroduced, the delicious theme introduced by the bassoon in the opening movement of the Concerto and heard again like a sorely missed friend in the finale, or the tricky rhythmic variation in the *I Got Rhythm* gig in which the pianist's left hand plays the melody inverted and the right plays it straight up, no chaser.

Better yet, listen to the whole package. Both McDermott and Brown know their Gershwin inside and out, and it spreads contagiously through the entire orchestra. The soundstage is ideal, allowing us to savor all the fine details as well as the broad sweep of these stunning showpieces. Produced, engineered and edited by Adam Abeshouse at the Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, the sonics are truly award class. Unless the selection committee all fall asleep at the switch, the sound recording, at least, should be up for a Grammy.